

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 49

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SUBCHAPTER I--GENERAL

§ 1101. Definitions

Section 2101(17a) of title 46 and section 40102(a) of this title apply to this chapter. In this chapter, the term “accident” includes damage to or destruction of vehicles in surface or air transportation or pipelines, regardless of whether the initiating event is accidental or otherwise.

SUBCHAPTER II--ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE

§ 1111. General organization

(a) ORGANIZATION.--The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent establishment of the United States Government.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS.--The Board is composed of 5 members appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. Not more than 3 members may be appointed from the same political party. At least 3 members shall be appointed on the basis of technical qualification, professional standing, and demonstrated knowledge in accident reconstruction, safety engineering, human factors, transportation safety, or transportation regulation.

(c) TERMS OF OFFICE AND REMOVAL.--The term of office of each member is 5 years. An individual appointed to fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration of the term for which the predecessor of that individual was appointed, is appointed for the remainder of that term. When the term of office of a member ends, the member may continue to serve until a successor is appointed and qualified. The President may remove a member for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office.

(d) CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.--The President shall designate, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a Chairman of the Board. The President also shall designate a Vice Chairman of the Board. The terms of office of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman are 2 years. When the Chairman is absent or unable to serve or when the position of Chairman is vacant, the Vice Chairman acts as Chairman.

(e) DUTIES AND POWERS OF CHAIRMAN.--The Chairman is the chief executive and administrative officer of the Board. Subject to the general policies and decisions of the Board, the Chairman shall--

(1) appoint, supervise, and fix the pay of officers and employees necessary to carry out this chapter;

(2) distribute business among the officers, employees, and administrative units of the Board; and

(3) supervise the expenditures of the Board.

(f) QUORUM.--Three members of the Board are a quorum in carrying out duties and powers of the Board.

(g) OFFICES, BUREAUS, AND DIVISIONS.--The Board shall establish offices necessary to carry out this chapter, including an office to investigate and report on the safe transportation of hazardous material. The Board shall establish distinct and appropriately staffed bureaus, divisions, or offices to investigate and report on accidents involving each of the following modes of transportation:

(1) aviation.

(2) highway and motor vehicle.

(3) rail and tracked vehicle.

(4) pipeline.

(h) CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER.--The Chairman shall designate an officer or employee of the Board as the Chief Financial Officer. The Chief Financial Officer shall--

(1) report directly to the Chairman on financial management and budget execution;

(2) direct, manage, and provide policy guidance and oversight on financial management and property and inventory control; and

(3) review the fees, rents, and other charges imposed by the Board for services and things of value it provides, and suggest appropriate revisions to those charges to reflect costs incurred by the Board in providing those services and things of value.

(i) SEAL.--The Board shall have a seal that shall be judicially recognized.

§ 1112. Special boards of inquiry on air transportation safety

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.--If an accident involves a substantial question about public safety in air transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board may establish a special board of inquiry composed of--

(1) one member of the Board acting as chairman; and

(2) 2 members representing the public, appointed by the President on notification of the establishment of the special board of inquiry.

(b) QUALIFICATIONS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.--The public members of a special board of inquiry must be qualified by training and experience to participate in the inquiry and may not have a pecuniary interest in an aviation enterprise involved in the accident to be investigated.

(c) AUTHORITY.--A special board of inquiry has the same authority that the Board has under this chapter.

§ 1113. Administrative

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITY.--

(1) The National Transportation Safety Board, and when authorized by it, a member of the Board, an administrative law judge employed by or assigned to the Board, or an officer or employee designated by the Chairman of the Board, may conduct hearings to carry out this chapter, administer oaths, and require, by subpoena or otherwise, necessary witnesses and evidence.

(2) A witness or evidence in a hearing under paragraph (1) of this subsection may be summoned or required to be produced from any place in the United States to the designated place of the hearing. A witness summoned under this subsection is entitled to the same fee and mileage the witness would have been paid in a court of the United States.

(3) A subpoena shall be issued under the signature of the Chairman or the Chairman's delegate but may be served by any person designated by the Chairman.

(4) If a person disobeys a subpoena, order, or inspection notice of the Board, the Board may bring a civil action in a district court of the United States to enforce the subpoena, order, or notice. An action under this paragraph may be brought in the judicial district in which the person against whom the action is brought resides, is found, or does business. The court may punish a failure to obey an order of the court to comply with the subpoena, order, or notice as a contempt of court.

(b) ADDITIONAL POWERS.--

(1) The Board may--

(A) procure the temporary or intermittent services of experts or consultants under section 3109 of title 5;

(B) make agreements and other transactions necessary to carry out this chapter without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5);

(C) use, when appropriate, available services, equipment, personnel, and facilities of a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government on a reimbursable or other basis;

(D) confer with employees and use services, records, and facilities of State and local governmental authorities;

(E) appoint advisory committees composed of qualified private citizens and officials of the Government and State and local governments as appropriate;

(F) accept voluntary and uncompensated services notwithstanding another law;

(G) accept gifts of money and other property;

(H) make contracts with nonprofit entities to carry out studies related to duties and powers of the Board; and

(I) negotiate and enter into agreements with individuals and private entities and departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government, State and local governments, and governments of foreign countries for the provision of facilities, accident-related and technical services or training in accident investigation theory and techniques, and require that such entities provide appropriate consideration for the reasonable costs of any facilities, goods, services, or training provided by the Board.

(2) The Board shall deposit in the Treasury amounts received under paragraph (1)(I) of this subsection to be credited as offsetting collections to the appropriation of the Board. The Board shall maintain an annual record of collections received under paragraph (1)(I) of this subsection.

(c) SUBMISSION OF CERTAIN COPIES TO CONGRESS.--When the Board submits to the President or the Director of the Office of Management and Budget a budget estimate, budget request, supplemental budget estimate, other budget information, a legislative recommendation, prepared testimony for congressional hearings, or comments on legislation, the Board must submit a copy to Congress at the same time. An officer, department, agency, or instrumentality of the Government may not require the Board to submit the estimate, request, information, recommendation, testimony, or comments to another officer, department, agency, or instrumentality of the Government for approval, comment, or review before being submitted to Congress.

(d) LIAISON COMMITTEES.--The Chairman may determine the number of committees that are appropriate to maintain effective liaison with other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government, State and local governmental authorities, and independent standard-setting authorities that carry out programs and activities related to transportation safety. The Board may designate representatives to serve on or assist those committees.

(e) INQUIRIES.--The Board, or an officer or employee of the Board designated by the Chairman, may conduct an inquiry to obtain information related to transportation safety after publishing notice of the inquiry in the Federal Register. The Board or designated officer or employee may require by order a department, agency, or instrumentality of the Government, a State or local governmental authority, or a person transporting individuals or property in commerce to submit to the Board a written report and answers to requests and questions related to a duty or power of the Board. The Board may prescribe the time within which the report and answers must be given to the Board or to the designated officer or employee. Copies of the report and answers shall be made available for public inspection.

(f) REGULATIONS.--The Board may prescribe regulations to carry out this chapter.

(g) OVERTIME PAY.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--Subject to the requirements of this section and notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 5542(a) of title 5, for an employee of the Board whose basic pay is at a rate which equals or exceeds the minimum rate of basic pay for GS-10 of the General Schedule, the Board may establish an overtime hourly rate of pay for the employee with respect to work performed at the scene of an accident (including travel to or from the scene) and other work that is critical to an accident investigation in an amount equal to one and one-half times the hourly rate of basic pay of the employee. All of such amount shall be considered to be premium pay.

(2) LIMITATION ON OVERTIME PAY TO AN EMPLOYEE.--An employee of the Board may not receive overtime pay under paragraph (1), for work performed in a calendar year, in an amount that exceeds 15 percent of the annual rate of basic pay of the employee for such calendar year.

(3) LIMITATION ON TOTAL AMOUNT OF OVERTIME PAY.-- The Board may not make overtime payments under paragraph (1) for work performed in any fiscal year in a total amount that exceeds 1.5 percent of the amount appropriated to carry out this chapter for that fiscal year.

(4) BASIC PAY DEFINED.--In this subsection, the term “basic pay” includes any applicable locality-based comparability payment under section 5304 of title 5 (or similar provision of law) and any special rate of pay under section 5305 of title 5 (or similar provision of law).

(5) ANNUAL REPORT.--Not later than January 31, 2002, and annually thereafter, the Board shall transmit to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee a report identifying the total amount of overtime payments made under this subsection in the preceding fiscal year, and the number of employees whose overtime pay under this subsection was limited in that fiscal year as a result of the 15 percent limit established by paragraph (2).

§ 1114. Disclosure, availability, and use of information

(a) GENERAL.--

(1) Except as provided in subsections (b), (c), (d) and (f) of this section, a copy of a record, information, or investigation submitted or received by the National Transportation Safety Board, or a member or employee of the Board, shall be made available to the public on identifiable request and at reasonable cost. This subsection does not require the release of information described by section 552(b) of title 5 or protected from disclosure by another law of the United States.

(2) The Board shall deposit in the Treasury amounts received under paragraph (1) to be credited to the appropriation of the Board as offsetting collections.

(b) TRADE SECRETS.--

(1) The Board may disclose information related to a trade secret referred to in section 1905 of title 18 only--

(A) to another department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government when requested for official use;

(B) to a committee of Congress having jurisdiction over the subject matter to which the information is related, when requested by that committee;

(C) in a judicial proceeding under a court order that preserves the confidentiality of the information without impairing the proceeding; and

(D) to the public to protect health and safety after giving notice to any interested person to whom the information is related and an opportunity for that person to comment in writing, or orally in closed session, on the proposed disclosure, if the delay resulting from notice and opportunity for comment would not be detrimental to health and safety.

(2) Information disclosed under paragraph (1) of this subsection may be disclosed only in a way designed to preserve its confidentiality.

(3) PROTECTION OF VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION.--

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, neither the Board, nor any agency receiving information from the Board, shall disclose voluntarily provided safety-related information if that information is not related to the exercise of the Board's accident or incident investigation authority under this chapter and if the Board finds that the disclosure of the information would inhibit the voluntary provision of that type of information.

(c) COCKPIT RECORDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTS.--

(1) The Board may not disclose publicly any part of a cockpit voice or video recorder recording or transcript of oral communications by and between flight crew members and ground stations related to an accident or incident investigated by the Board. However, the Board shall make public any part of a transcript or any written depiction of visual information the Board decides is relevant to the accident or incident--

(A) if the Board holds a public hearing on the accident or incident, at the time of the hearing; or

(B) if the Board does not hold a public hearing, at the time a majority of the other factual reports on the accident or incident are placed in the public docket.

(2) This subsection does not prevent the Board from referring at any time to cockpit voice or video recorder information in making safety recommendations.

(d) SURFACE VEHICLE RECORDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTS.--

(1) CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDINGS.--The Board may not disclose publicly any part of a surface vehicle voice or video recorder recording or transcript of oral communications by or among drivers, train employees, or other operating employees responsible for the movement and direction of the vehicle or vessel, or between such operating employees and company communication centers, related to an accident investigated by the Board. However, the Board shall make public any part of a transcript or any written depiction of visual information that the Board decides is relevant to the accident--

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(A) if the Board holds a public hearing on the accident, at the time of the hearing; or

(B) if the Board does not hold a public hearing, at the time a majority of the other factual reports on the accident are placed in the public docket.

(2) REFERENCES TO INFORMATION IN MAKING SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS.-- This subsection does not prevent the Board from referring at any time to voice or video recorder information in making safety recommendations.

(e) DRUG TESTS.--

(1) Notwithstanding section 503(e) of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1987 (Public Law 100-71, 101 Stat. 471), the Secretary of Transportation shall provide the following information to the Board when requested in writing by the Board:

(A) any report of a confirmed positive toxicological test, verified as positive by a medical review officer, conducted on an officer or employee of the Department of Transportation under post-accident, unsafe practice, or reasonable suspicion toxicological testing requirements of the Department, when the officer or employee is reasonably

associated with the circumstances of an accident or incident under the investigative jurisdiction of the Board.

(B) any laboratory record documenting that the test is confirmed positive.

(2) Except as provided by paragraph (3) of this subsection, the Board shall maintain the confidentiality of, and exempt from disclosure under section 552(b)(3) of title 5--

(A) a laboratory record provided the Board under paragraph (1) of this subsection that reveals medical use of a drug allowed under applicable regulations; and

(B) medical information provided by the tested officer or employee related to the test or a review of the test.

(3) The Board may use a laboratory record made available under paragraph (1) of this subsection to develop an evidentiary record in an investigation of an accident or incident if--

(A) the fitness of the tested officer or employee is at issue in the investigation; and

(B) the use of that record is necessary to develop the evidentiary record.

(f) FOREIGN INVESTIGATIONS.--

(1) In general.--Notwithstanding any other provision of law, neither the Board, nor any agency receiving information from the Board, shall disclose records or information relating to its participation in foreign aircraft accident investigations; except that--

(A) the Board shall release records pertaining to such an investigation when the country conducting the investigation issues its final report or 2 years following the date of the accident, whichever occurs first; and

(B) the Board may disclose records and information when authorized to do so by the country conducting the investigation.

(2) Safety recommendations.--Nothing in this subsection shall restrict the Board at any time from referring to foreign accident investigation information in making safety recommendations.

§ 1115. Training

(a) DEFINITION.--In this section, "Institute" means the Transportation Safety Institute of the Department of Transportation and any successor organization of the Institute.

(b) USE OF INSTITUTE SERVICES.--The National Transportation Safety Board may use, on a reimbursable basis, the services of the Institute. The Secretary of Transportation shall make the Institute available to--

(1) the Board for safety training of employees of the Board in carrying out their duties and powers; and

(2) other safety personnel of the United States Government, State and local governments, governments of foreign countries, interstate authorities, and private organizations the Board designates in consultation with the Secretary.

(c) FEES.--

(1) Training at the Institute for safety personnel (except employees of the Government) shall be provided at a reasonable fee established periodically by the Board in consultation with the Secretary. The fee shall be paid directly to the Secretary, and the Secretary shall deposit the fee in the Treasury. The amount of the fee--

(A) shall be credited to the appropriate appropriation (subject to the requirements of any annual appropriation); and

(B) is an offset against any annual reimbursement agreement between the Board and the Secretary to cover all reasonable costs of providing training under this subsection that the Secretary incurs in operating the Institute.

(2) The Board shall maintain an annual record of offsets under paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection.

(d) TRAINING OF BOARD EMPLOYEES AND OTHERS.--The Board may conduct training of its employees in those subjects necessary for the proper performance of accident investigation. The Board may also authorize attendance at courses given under this subsection by other government personnel, personnel of foreign governments, and personnel from industry or otherwise who have a requirement for accident investigation training. The Board may require non-Board personnel to reimburse some or all of the training costs, and amounts so reimbursed shall be credited to the appropriation of the Board as offsetting collections.

§ 1116. Reports and studies

(a) PERIODIC REPORTS.--The National Transportation Safety Board shall report periodically to Congress, departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the United States Government and State and local governmental authorities concerned with transportation safety, and other interested persons. The report shall--

(1) advocate meaningful responses to reduce the likelihood of transportation accidents similar to those investigated by the Board; and

(2) propose corrective action to make the transportation of individuals as safe and free from risk of injury as possible, including action to minimize personal injuries that occur in transportation accidents.

(b) STUDIES, INVESTIGATIONS, AND OTHER REPORTS.--The Board also shall--

(1) carry out special studies and investigations about transportation safety, including avoiding personal injury;

(2) examine techniques and methods of accident investigation and periodically publish recommended procedures for accident investigations;

(3) prescribe requirements for persons reporting accidents and aviation incidents that--

(A) may be investigated by the Board under this chapter; or

(B) involve public aircraft (except aircraft of the armed forces and the intelligence agencies);

(4) evaluate, examine the effectiveness of, and publish the findings of the Board about the transportation safety consciousness of other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government and their effectiveness in preventing accidents; and

(5) evaluate the adequacy of safeguards and procedures for the transportation of hazardous material and the performance of other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government responsible for the safe transportation of that material.

§ 1117. Annual report

The National Transportation Safety Board shall submit a report to Congress on July 1 of each year. The report shall include--

(1) a statistical and analytical summary of the transportation accident investigations conducted and reviewed by the Board during the prior calendar year;

(2) a survey and summary of the recommendations made by the Board to reduce the likelihood of recurrence of those accidents together with the observed response to each recommendation; and

(3) a detailed appraisal of the accident investigation and accident prevention activities of other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the United States Government and State and local governmental authorities having responsibility for those activities under a law of the United States or a State.

§ 1118. Authorization of appropriations

(a) IN GENERAL.--There are authorized to be appropriated for the purposes of this chapter \$57,000,000 for fiscal year 2000, \$65,000,000 for fiscal year 2001, \$72,000,000 for fiscal year 2002, \$73,325,000 for fiscal year 2003, \$78,757,000 for fiscal year 2004, \$83,011,000 for fiscal year 2005, and \$87,539,000 for fiscal year 2006. Such sums shall remain available until expended.

(b) EMERGENCY FUND.--The Board has an emergency fund of \$2,000,000 available for necessary expenses of the Board, not otherwise provided for, for accident investigations. In addition, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to increase the fund to, and maintain the fund at, a level not to exceed \$4,000,000.

(c) ACADEMY.-- (1) AUTHORIZATION.--There are authorized to be appropriated to the Board for necessary expenses of the National Transportation Safety Board Academy, not otherwise provided for, \$3,347,000 for fiscal year 2003, \$4,896,000 for fiscal year 2004, \$4,995,000 for fiscal year 2005, and \$5,200,000 for fiscal year 2006. Such sums shall remain available until expended.

(2) FEES.--The Board may impose and collect such fees as it determines to be appropriate for services provided by or through the Academy.

(3) RECEIPTS CREDITED AS OFFSETTING COLLECTIONS.--Notwithstanding section 3302 of title 31, any fee collected under this subsection--

(A) shall be credited as offsetting collections to the account that finances the activities and services for which the fee is imposed;

(B) shall be available for expenditure only to pay the costs of activities and services for which the fee is imposed; and

(C) shall remain available until expended.

(4) REFUNDS.--The Board may refund any fee paid by mistake or any amount paid in excess of that required.

(d) REPORT ON ACADEMY OPERATIONS.--The National Transportation Safety Board shall transmit an annual report to the Congress on the activities and operations of the National Transportation Safety Board Academy.

§ 1119. Accident and safety data classification and publication

(a) IN GENERAL.--Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the National Transportation Safety Board shall, in consultation and coordination with the

Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, develop a system for classifying air carrier accident data maintained by the Board.

(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--The system developed under this section shall provide for the classification of accident and safety data in a manner that, in comparison to the system in effect on the date of the enactment of this section, provides for safety-related categories that provide clearer descriptions of accidents associated with air transportation, including a more refined classification of accidents which involve fatalities, injuries, or substantial damage and which are only related to the operation of an aircraft.

(2) PUBLIC COMMENT.--In developing a system of classification under paragraph (1), the Board shall provide adequate opportunity for public review and comment.

(3) FINAL CLASSIFICATION.--After providing for public review and comment, and after consulting with the Administrator, the Board shall issue final classifications. The Board shall ensure that air travel accident[s] covered under this section [are] classified in accordance with the final classifications issued under this section for data for calendar year 1997, and for each subsequent calendar year.

(4) PUBLICATION.--The Board shall publish on a periodic basis accident and safety data in accordance with the final classifications issued under paragraph (3).

(5) RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR.--The Administrator may, from time to time, request the Board to consider revisions (including additions to the classification system developed under this section). The Board shall respond to any request made by the Administrator under this section not later than 90 days after receiving that request.

(c) APPEALS.--

(1) NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS.--In any case in which an employee of the Board determines that an occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft constitutes an accident, the employee shall notify the owner or operator of that aircraft of the right to appeal that determination to the Board.

(2) PROCEDURE.--The Board shall establish and publish the procedures for appeals under this subsection.

(3) LIMITATION ON APPLICABILITY.--This subsection shall not apply in the case of an accident that results in a loss of life.

SUBCHAPTER III--AUTHORITY

§ 1131. General authority

(a) GENERAL.--

(1) The National Transportation Safety Board shall investigate or have investigated (in detail the Board prescribes) and establish the facts, circumstances, and cause or probable cause of--

(A) an aircraft accident the Board has authority to investigate under section 1132 of this title or an aircraft accident involving a public aircraft as defined by section 40102(a)(37) of this title other than an aircraft operated by the Armed Forces or by an intelligence agency of the United States;

(B) a highway accident, including a railroad grade crossing accident, the Board selects in cooperation with a State;

(C) a railroad accident in which there is a fatality or substantial property damage, or that involves a passenger train;

(D) a pipeline accident in which there is a fatality, substantial property damage, or significant injury to the environment;

(E) a major marine casualty (except a casualty involving only public vessels) occurring on the navigable waters or territorial sea of the United States, or involving a vessel of the United States, under regulations prescribed jointly by the Board and the head of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating; and

(F) any other accident related to the transportation of individuals or property when the Board decides--

(i) the accident is catastrophic;

(ii) the accident involves problems of a recurring character; or

(iii) the investigation of the accident would carry out this chapter.

(2)(A) Subject to the requirements of this paragraph, an investigation by the Board under paragraph (1)(A)-(D) or (F) of this subsection has priority over any investigation by another department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government. The Board shall provide for appropriate participation by other departments, agencies, or instrumentalities in the investigation. However, those departments, agencies, or instrumentalities may not participate in the decision of the Board about the probable cause of the accident.

(B) If the Attorney General, in consultation with the Chairman of the Board, determines and notifies the Board that circumstances reasonably indicate that the accident may have been caused by an intentional criminal act, the Board shall relinquish

investigative priority to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The relinquishment of investigative priority by the Board shall not otherwise affect the authority of the Board to continue its investigation under this section.

(C) If a Federal law enforcement agency suspects and notifies the Board that an accident being investigated by the Board under subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) may have been caused by an intentional criminal act, the Board, in consultation with the law enforcement agency, shall take necessary actions to ensure that evidence of the criminal act is preserved.

(3) This section and sections 1113, 1116(b), 1133, and 1134(a) and (c)-(e) of this title do not affect the authority of another department, agency, or instrumentality of the Government to investigate an accident under applicable law or to obtain information directly from the parties involved in, and witnesses to, the accident. The Board and other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities shall ensure that appropriate information developed about the accident is exchanged in a timely manner.

(b) ACCIDENTS INVOLVING PUBLIC VESSELS.--

(1) The Board or the head of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating shall investigate and establish the facts, circumstances, and cause or probable cause of a marine accident involving a public vessel and any other vessel. The results of the investigation shall be made available to the public.

(2) Paragraph (1) of this subsection and subsection (a)(1)(E) of this section do not affect the responsibility, under another law of the United States, of the head of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating.

(c) ACCIDENTS NOT INVOLVING GOVERNMENT MISFEASANCE OR NONFEASANCE.--

(1) When asked by the Board, the Secretary of Transportation may--

(A) investigate an accident described under subsection (a) or (b) of this section in which misfeasance or nonfeasance by the Government has not been alleged; and

(B) report the facts and circumstances of the accident to the Board.

(2) The Board shall use the report in establishing cause or probable cause of an accident described under subsection (a) or (b) of this section.

(d) ACCIDENTS INVOLVING PUBLIC AIRCRAFT.--The Board, in furtherance of its investigative duties with respect to public aircraft accidents under subsection (a)(1)(A) of this section, shall have the same duties and powers as are specified for civil aircraft accidents under sections 1132(a), 1132(b), and 1134 (a), (b), (d), and (f) of this title.

(e) ACCIDENT REPORTS.--The Board shall report on the facts and circumstances of each accident investigated by it under subsection (a) or (b) of this section. The Board shall make each report available to the public at reasonable cost.

§ 1132. Civil aircraft accident investigations

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITY.--

(1) The National Transportation Safety Board shall investigate--

(A) each accident involving civil aircraft; and

(B) with the participation of appropriate military authorities, each accident involving both military and civil aircraft.

(2) A person employed under section 1113(b)(1) of this title that is conducting an investigation or hearing about an aircraft accident has the same authority to conduct the investigation or hearing as the Board.

(b) NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING.--The Board shall prescribe regulations governing the notification and reporting of accidents involving civil aircraft.

(c) PARTICIPATION OF SECRETARY.--The Board shall provide for the participation of the Secretary of Transportation in the investigation of an aircraft accident under this chapter when participation is necessary to carry out the duties and powers of the Secretary. However, the Secretary may not participate in establishing probable cause.

(d) ACCIDENTS INVOLVING ONLY MILITARY AIRCRAFT.--If an accident involves only military aircraft and a duty of the Secretary is or may be involved, the military authorities shall provide for the participation of the Secretary. In any other accident involving only military aircraft, the military authorities shall give the Board or Secretary information the military authorities decide would contribute to the promotion of air safety.

§ 1133. Review of other agency action

The National Transportation Safety Board shall review on appeal--

(1) the denial, amendment, modification, suspension, or revocation of a certificate issued by the Secretary of Transportation under section 44703, 44709, or 44710 of this title;

(2) the revocation of a certificate of registration under section 44106 of this title;

(3) a decision of the head of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating on an appeal from the decision of an administrative law judge denying, revoking, or suspending a

license, certificate, document, or register in a proceeding under section 6101, 6301, or 7503, chapter 77, or section 9303 of title 46; and

(4) under section 46301(d)(5) of this title, an order imposing a penalty under section 46301.

§ 1134. Inspections and autopsies

(a) ENTRY AND INSPECTION.--An officer or employee of the National Transportation Safety Board--

(1) on display of appropriate credentials and written notice of inspection authority, may enter property where a transportation accident has occurred or wreckage from the accident is located and do anything necessary to conduct an investigation; and

(2) during reasonable hours, may inspect any record, process, control, or facility related to an accident investigation under this chapter.

(b) INSPECTION, TESTING, PRESERVATION, AND MOVING OF AIRCRAFT AND PARTS.--

(1) In investigating an aircraft accident under this chapter, the Board may inspect and test, to the extent necessary, any civil aircraft, aircraft engine, propeller, appliance, or property on an aircraft involved in an accident in air commerce.

(2) Any civil aircraft, aircraft engine, propeller, appliance, or property on an aircraft involved in an accident in air commerce shall be preserved, and may be moved, only as provided by regulations of the Board.

(c) AVOIDING UNNECESSARY INTERFERENCE AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE.--In carrying out subsection (a)(1) of this section, an officer or employee may examine or test any vehicle, vessel, rolling stock, track, or pipeline component. The examination or test shall be conducted in a way that--

(1) does not interfere unnecessarily with transportation services provided by the owner or operator of the vehicle, vessel, rolling stock, track, or pipeline component; and

(2) to the maximum extent feasible, preserves evidence related to the accident, consistent with the needs of the investigation and with the cooperation of that owner or operator.

(d) EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY OF BOARD.--Only the Board has the authority to decide on the way in which testing under this section will be conducted, including decisions on the person that will conduct the test, the type of test that will be conducted, and any individual who will witness the test. Those decisions are committed to the discretion of the Board. The Board shall

make any of those decisions based on the needs of the investigation being conducted and, when applicable, subsections (a), (c), and (e) of this section.

(e) **PROMPTNESS OF TESTS AND AVAILABILITY OF RESULTS.**--An inspection, examination, or test under subsection (a) or (c) of this section shall be started and completed promptly, and the results shall be made available.

(f) **AUTOPSIES.**--

(1) The Board may order an autopsy to be performed and have other tests made when necessary to investigate an accident under this chapter. However, local law protecting religious beliefs related to autopsies shall be observed to the extent consistent with the needs of the accident investigation.

(2) With or without reimbursement, the Board may obtain a copy of an autopsy report performed by a State or local official on an individual who died because of a transportation accident investigated by the Board under this chapter.

§ 1135. Secretary of Transportation's responses to safety recommendations

(a) **GENERAL.**--When the National Transportation Safety Board submits a recommendation about transportation safety to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary shall give a formal written response to each recommendation not later than 90 days after receiving the recommendation. The response shall indicate whether the Secretary intends--

(1) to carry out procedures to adopt the complete recommendation;

(2) to carry out procedures to adopt a part of the recommendation; or

(3) to refuse to carry out procedures to adopt the recommendation.

(b) **TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETING PROCEDURES AND REASONS FOR REFUSALS.**--A response under subsection (a)(1) or (2) of this section shall include a copy of a proposed timetable for completing the procedures. A response under subsection (a)(2) of this section shall detail the reasons for the refusal to carry out procedures on the remainder of the recommendation. A response under subsection (a)(3) of this section shall detail the reasons for the refusal to carry out procedures.

(c) **PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.**--The Board shall make a copy of each recommendation and response available to the public at reasonable cost.

(d) **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**--

(1) **ANNUAL SECRETARIAL REGULATORY STATUS REPORTS.**-- On February 1 of each year, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress and the Board containing the

regulatory status of each recommendation made by the Board to the Secretary (or to an Administration within the Department of Transportation) that is on the Board's 'most wanted list.' The Secretary shall continue to report on the regulatory status of each such recommendation in the report due on February 1 of subsequent years until final regulatory action is taken on that recommendation or the Secretary (or an Administration within the Department) determines and states in such a report that no action should be taken.

(2) FAILURE TO REPORT. -- If on March 1 of each year the Board has not received the Secretary's report required by this subsection, the Board shall notify the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate of the Secretary's failure to submit the required report.

(3) TERMINATION. -- This subsection shall cease to be in effect after the report required to be filed on February 1, 2008, is filed.

§ 1136. Assistance to families of passengers involved in aircraft accidents

(a) IN GENERAL.--As soon as practicable after being notified of an aircraft accident within the United States involving an air carrier or foreign air carrier and resulting in a major loss of life, the Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board shall--

(1) designate and publicize the name and phone number of a director of family support services who shall be an employee of the Board and shall be responsible for acting as a point of contact within the Federal Government for the families of passengers involved in the accident and a liaison between the air carrier or foreign air carrier and the families; and

(2) designate an independent nonprofit organization, with experience in disasters and post-trauma communication with families, which shall have primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care and support of the families of passengers involved in the accident.

(b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD.--The Board shall have primary Federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally-injured passengers involved in an accident described in subsection (a).

(c) RESPONSIBILITIES OF DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.--The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall have the following responsibilities with respect to the families of passengers involved in the accident:

(1) To provide mental health and counseling services, in coordination with the disaster response team of the air carrier or foreign air carrier involved.

(2) To take such actions as may be necessary to provide an environment in which the families may grieve in private.

(3) To meet with the families who have traveled to the location of the accident, to contact the families unable to travel to such location, and to contact all affected families periodically thereafter until such time as the organization, in consultation with the director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1), determines that further assistance is no longer needed.

(4) To communicate with the families as to the roles of the organization, government agencies, and the air carrier or foreign air carrier involved with respect to the accident and the post-accident activities.

(5) To arrange a suitable memorial service, in consultation with the families.

(d) PASSENGER LISTS.--

(1) REQUESTS FOR PASSENGER LISTS.--

(A) REQUESTS BY DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES.--It shall be the responsibility of the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1) to request, as soon as practicable, from the air carrier or foreign air carrier involved in the accident a list, which is based on the best available information at the time of the request, of the names of the passengers that were aboard the aircraft involved in the accident.

(B) REQUESTS BY DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.--The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) may request from the air carrier or foreign air carrier involved in the accident a list described in subparagraph (A).

(2) USE OF INFORMATION.--The director of family support services and the organization may not release to any person information on a list obtained under paragraph (1) but may provide information on the list about a passenger to the family of the passenger to the extent that the director of family support services or the organization considers appropriate.

(e) CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD.--In the course of its investigation of an accident described in subsection (a), the Board shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the families of passengers involved in the accident--

(1) are briefed, prior to any public briefing, about the accident, its causes, and any other findings from the investigation; and

(2) are individually informed of and allowed to attend any public hearings and meetings of the Board about the accident.

(f) USE OF AIR CARRIER RESOURCES.--To the extent practicable, the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall coordinate its activities with the air

carrier or foreign air carrier involved in the accident so that the resources of the carrier can be used to the greatest extent possible to carry out the organization's responsibilities under this section.

(g) PROHIBITED ACTIONS.--

(1) ACTIONS TO IMPEDE THE BOARD.--No person (including a State or political subdivision) may impede the ability of the Board (including the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1)), or an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2), to carry out its responsibilities under this section or the ability of the families of passengers involved in the accident to have contact with one another.

(2) UNSOLICITED COMMUNICATIONS.--In the event of an accident involving an air carrier providing interstate or foreign air transportation and in the event of an accident involving a foreign air carrier that occurs within the United States, no unsolicited communication concerning a potential action for personal injury or wrongful death may be made by an attorney (including any associate, agent, employee, or other representative of an attorney) or any potential party to the litigation to an individual injured in the accident, or to a relative of an individual involved in the accident, before the 45th day following the date of the accident.

(3) PROHIBITION ON ACTIONS TO PREVENT MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELING SERVICES.--No State or political subdivision thereof may prevent the employees, agents, or volunteers of an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) from providing mental health and counseling services under subsection (c)(1) in the 30-day period beginning on the date of the accident. The director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1) may extend such period for not to exceed an additional 30 days if the director determines that the extension is necessary to meet the needs of the families and if State and local authorities are notified of the determination.

(h) DEFINITIONS.--In this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT.--The term 'aircraft accident' means any aviation disaster regardless of its cause or suspected cause.

(2) PASSENGER.--The term "passenger" includes-- (A) an employee of an air carrier or foreign air carrier aboard an aircraft; and (B) any other person aboard the aircraft without regard to whether the person paid for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the flight.

(i) STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.--Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that an air carrier may take, or the obligations that an air carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in an aircraft accident.

(j) RELINQUISHMENT OF INVESTIGATIVE PRIORITY.--

(1) GENERAL RULE.-- This section (other than subsection (g)) shall not apply to an aircraft accident if the Board has relinquished investigative priority under section 1131(a)(2)(B) and the Federal agency to which the Board relinquished investigative priority is willing and able to provide assistance to the victims and families of the passengers involved in the accident.

(2) BOARD ASSISTANCE.--If this section does not apply to an aircraft accident because the Board has relinquished investigative priority with respect to the accident, the Board shall assist, to the maximum extent possible, the agency to which the Board has relinquished investigative priority in assisting families with respect to the accident.

§ 1137. Authority of the Inspector General

(a) IN GENERAL.--The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation, in accordance with the mission of the Inspector General to prevent and detect fraud and abuse, shall have authority to review only the financial management, property management, and business operations of the National Transportation Safety Board, including internal accounting and administrative control systems, to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

(b) DUTIES.--In carrying out this section, the Inspector General shall-- (1) keep the Chairman of the Board and Congress fully and currently informed about problems relating to administration of the internal accounting and administrative control systems of the Board; (2) issue findings and recommendations for actions to address such problems; and (3) report periodically to Congress on any progress made in implementing actions to address such problems.

(c) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.--In carrying out this section, the Inspector General may exercise authorities granted to the Inspector General under subsections (a) and (b) of section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) REIMBURSEMENT.--The Inspector General shall be reimbursed by the Board for the costs associated with carrying out activities under this section.

SUBCHAPTER IV--ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

§ 1151. Aviation enforcement

(a) CIVIL ACTIONS BY BOARD.--The National Transportation Safety Board may bring a civil action in a district court of the United States against a person to enforce section 1132, 1134(b) or (f)(1)(related to an aircraft accident), 1136(g)(2), or 1155(a) of this title or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those sections. An action under this

subsection may be brought in the judicial district in which the person does business or the violation occurred.

(b) CIVIL ACTIONS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.--On request of the Board, the Attorney General may bring a civil action in an appropriate court--

(1) to enforce section 1132, 1134(b) or (f)(1)(related to an aircraft accident), 1136(g)(2), or 1155(a) of this title or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those sections; and

(2) to prosecute a person violating those sections or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those sections.

(c) PARTICIPATION OF BOARD.--On request of the Attorney General, the Board may participate in a civil action to enforce section 1132, 1134(b) or (f)(1)(related to an aircraft accident), 1136(g)(2), or 1155(a) of this title.

§ 1152. Joinder and intervention in aviation proceedings

A person interested in or affected by a matter under consideration in a proceeding or a civil action to enforce section 1132, 1134(b) or (f)(1)(related to an aircraft accident), or 1155(a) of this title, or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those sections, may be joined as a party or permitted to intervene in the proceeding or civil action.

§ 1153. Judicial review

(a) GENERAL.--The appropriate court of appeals of the United States or the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit may review a final order of the National Transportation Safety Board under this chapter. A person disclosing a substantial interest in the order may apply for review by filing a petition not later than 60 days after the order of the Board is issued.

(b) PERSONS SEEKING JUDICIAL REVIEW OF AVIATION MATTERS.--

(1) A person disclosing a substantial interest in an order related to an aviation matter issued by the Board under this chapter may apply for review of the order by filing a petition for review in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit or in the court of appeals of the United States for the circuit in which the person resides or has its principal place of business. The petition must be filed not later than 60 days after the order is issued. The court may allow the petition to be filed after the 60 days only if there was a reasonable ground for not filing within that 60-day period.

(2) When a petition is filed under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the clerk of the court immediately shall send a copy of the petition to the Board. The Board shall file with the court a record of the proceeding in which the order was issued.

(3) When the petition is sent to the Board, the court has exclusive jurisdiction to affirm, amend, modify, or set aside any part of the order and may order the Board to conduct further proceedings. After reasonable notice to the Board, the court may grant interim relief by staying the order or taking other appropriate action when cause for its action exists. Findings of fact by the Board, if supported by substantial evidence, are conclusive.

(4) In reviewing an order under this subsection, the court may consider an objection to an order of the Board only if the objection was made in the proceeding conducted by the Board or if there was a reasonable ground for not making the objection in the proceeding.

(5) A decision by a court under this subsection may be reviewed only by the Supreme Court under section 1254 of title 28.

(c) ADMINISTRATOR SEEKING JUDICIAL REVIEW OF AVIATION MATTERS.--When the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration decides that an order of the Board under section 44709 or 46301(d)(5) of this title will have a significant adverse impact on

carrying out this chapter related to an aviation matter, the Administrator may obtain judicial review of the order under section 46110 of this title. The Administrator shall be made a party to the judicial review proceedings. Findings of fact of the Board are conclusive if supported by substantial evidence.

§ 1154. Discovery and use of cockpit and surface vehicle recordings and transcripts

(a) TRANSCRIPTS AND RECORDINGS.--

(1) Except as provided by this subsection, a party in a judicial proceeding may not use discovery to obtain--

(A) any part of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder transcript that the National Transportation Safety Board has not made available to the public under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title; and

(B) a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording.

(2)(A) Except as provided in paragraph (4)(A) of this subsection, a court may allow discovery by a party of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder transcript if, after an in camera review of the transcript, the court decides that--

(i) the part of the transcript made available to the public under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title does not provide the party with sufficient information for the party to receive a fair trial; and

(ii) discovery of additional parts of the transcript is necessary to provide the party with sufficient information for the party to receive a fair trial.

(B) A court may allow discovery, or require production for an in camera review, of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder transcript that the Board has not made available under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title only if the cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording is not available.

(3) Except as provided in paragraph (4)(A) of this subsection, a court may allow discovery by a party of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording if, after an in camera review of the recording, the court decides that--

(A) the parts of the transcript made available to the public under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title and to the party through discovery under paragraph (2) of this subsection do not provide the party with sufficient information for the party to receive a fair trial; and

(B) discovery of the cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording is necessary to provide the party with sufficient information for the party to receive a fair trial.

(4)(A) When a court allows discovery in a judicial proceeding of a part of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder transcript not made available to the public under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title or a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording, the court shall issue a protective order--

(i) to limit the use of the part of the transcript or the recording to the judicial proceeding; and

(ii) to prohibit dissemination of the part of the transcript or the recording to any person that does not need access to the part of the transcript or the recording for the proceeding.

(B) A court may allow a part of a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder transcript not made available to the public under section 1114(c) or 1114(d) of this title or a cockpit or surface vehicle recorder recording to be admitted into evidence in a judicial proceeding, only if the court places the part of the transcript or the recording under seal to prevent the use of the part of the transcript or the recording for purposes other than for the proceeding.

(5) This subsection does not prevent the Board from referring at any time to cockpit or surface vehicle recorder information in making safety recommendations.

(6) In this subsection:

(A) RECORDER.--The term “recorder” means a voice or video recorder.

(B) TRANSCRIPT.--The term “transcript” includes any written depiction of visual information obtained from a video recorder.

(b) REPORTS.--No part of a report of the Board, related to an accident or an investigation of an accident, may be admitted into evidence or used in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report.

§ 1155. Aviation penalties

(a) CIVIL PENALTY.--

(1) A person violating section 1132, section 1134(b), section 1134(f)(1), or section 1136(g) (related to an aircraft accident) of this title or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those sections is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000. A separate violation occurs for each day a violation continues.

(2) This subsection does not apply to a member of the armed forces of the United States or an employee of the Department of Defense subject to the Uniform Code of Military

Justice when the member or employee is performing official duties. The appropriate military authorities are responsible for taking necessary disciplinary action and submitting to the National Transportation Safety Board a timely report on action taken.

(3) The Board may compromise the amount of a civil penalty imposed under this subsection.

(4) The Government may deduct the amount of a civil penalty imposed or compromised under this subsection from amounts it owes the person liable for the penalty.

(5) A civil penalty under this subsection may be collected by bringing a civil action against the person liable for the penalty. The action shall conform as nearly as practicable to a civil action in admiralty.

(b) CRIMINAL PENALTY.--A person that knowingly and without authority removes, conceals, or withholds a part of a civil aircraft involved in an accident, or property on the aircraft at the time of the accident, shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 10 years, or both.

Public Law 103-272, July 5, 1994 (re-codification), as amended by:

Pub. L. 103-411, October 25, 1994
Pub. L. 104-66, December 21, 1995
Pub. L. 104-264, October 9, 1996
Pub. L. 104-291, October 11, 1996
Pub. L. 106-181, April 5, 2000
Pub. L. 106-424, November 1, 2000
Pub. L. 108-168, December 6, 2003